

A Brief History of the Park Street Streetscape Project

The current project is actually the continuation (Phase two) of the Park Street Streetscape Improvement Project (between Webb Street and Central Avenue) that was completed in 2006 (Phase one). The original plan was developed by a consultant experienced with designing numerous Northern California streetscape projects, and included numerous meetings between 2001 and 2003 to elicit input from the community, develop various design alternatives, and select a preferred alternative.

As part of the public process, the City created a Citizens Advisory Group Committee and a Technical Advisory Group Committee to help develop the plan. The Citizen-based committee included downtown business owners and operators, Park Street Business Association representatives, and interested residents. The Technical Group included city staff from the Public Works, Planning, Development Services, and Alameda Municipal Power departments as well as the Mayor's Committee on Disabled Access and the Alameda Architectural Preservation Society. A broadly advertised public meeting was also held in November 2003 to present the final preferred design alternative to the community. Once completed, the improvements were well received by the public and the businesses and have significantly improved the appearance of that stretch of Park Street.

The current project, Phase two, will continue this plan to San Jose Avenue and includes the planting of new street trees (roughly two new trees for every one removed), the installation of decorative/historic street lights, bike racks, bus shelters, and parking meter kiosks. The plan calls for new street trees to be crape myrtles and ginkgos. The newly planted trees will include tree guards, which will protect the trees from vandalism (many of the trees in Phase one had the tree leaders snapped off), and will allow the trees to dedicate their energy to growing rather than healing itself due to defacement. Lastly, planting the trees in the dormant season will create less stress for the trees and should encourage faster growth.

The existing street trees that were removed as part of this project were not well suited for the existing urban environment. The root structure for many of the trees was raising the sidewalk and required costly replacement of sidewalks to avoid potential tripping concerns in a pedestrian intensive setting.

Finally, the Master Street Tree Plan, which was prepared in consultation with a certified arborist, supported by members of *Friends of Alameda's Trees*, and included numerous community meetings between 2007 and 2010, acknowledged that trees on Park Street were performing unsatisfactorily, and that priority actions should include removing street trees along Park Street that are in decline and replacing them with new ones. This Plan went before the Planning Board in September and November, 2009 and City Council in February, 2010 for public hearings.